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Tilly XV wins 2017 Gstaad Yacht Club Centenary Trophy

Photo-finish may seem an overstatement to define centenarian yachts crossing the finish line. But this is actually what happened in Saint-Tropez where eleven crews, out of twenty entrants, finished the race for the 2017 Gstaad Yacht Club Centenary Trophy, the only sailing trophy reserved to boats of one hundred years and more. *Tilly XV* made the best possible debut at the regatta by snatching a well-deserved victory for a handful of seconds from *Spartan*, with *Linnet* closing in third.

The event, raced in a pursuit format with staggered starts, features an especially created and constantly refined handicap system, allowing very different boats in size and rig to compete on equal terms, with the first boat to cross the line off the Saint-Tropez breakwater to be declared the winner.

Racing started in pretty light wind, of around 5 knots, and progressively increased to exceed 20 knots at the mark positioned outside the bay. So much that several crews decided for safety reasons not to gybe, but to tack around the buoy. The leg back to the finish line, was a three-boat fight among German flagged *Tilly XV*, 2016 champion NY50 gaff cutter *Spartan*, from the USA and NY30 *Linnet*, skippered by Brazilian sailing star Torben Grael. Despite their bigger size and most powerful sail plan, the two pursuers could not catch up with the German boat, especially at ease in lighter air and very well sailed by her experienced crew, with skipper Juerg Moessnang and owner Siegfried Rittler.

Tilly XV was built in 1912 Germany for Prince Heinrich Von Preussen, the brother of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and is the fifteenth of a series of boats that all carry the same name. She is a Sonderklass racer, with a particularly contemporary design, that won the Kiel Week in the very same year she was launched. There are still some 40 Sonderklass boats, mostly sailing in Austria, Germany and the USA.

Siegfried Rittler, has been owning and caring for *Tilly XV* for over 27 years. *“I’m a mountaineer and a sailor. I have been building and sailing wooden boats since the age of 15. In 2012, when she was turning 100 years old, I restored Tilly XV to her original state and since then she has been on a winning streak, both in the USA and in Europe. Winning the Centenary Trophy is something special, you cannot just show up but you have to be invited and sail well.”* explained Rittler. *“The finish was a bit like David against Goliath. I only met the skipper of Spartan after racing and I realised it was him because I read the boat’s name on his shirt. So, I congratulated him for being so fast. When he asked me who I was and I replied I was Tilly’s owner, he congratulated me for being even faster!”*

During the prize-giving night besides the Centenary Trophy, past 2014 winner *Olympian* was also awarded with the first GYC Centenary Trophy’s collection pictures: a limited edition of images featuring the winning yachts from the first six editions, that have been selected by the club board and official photographer Juerg Kaufmann. Production will be limited to 10 copies, they will be presented each year together with a black and white print of the Centenary Trophy’s picture.

“It was another magical edition of the Centenary Trophy. I am especially pleased to see such a positive attitude from the crews, they may fight out on the water for victory. But ashore, the atmosphere is super friendly and we all share the same values. It is something I am particularly

proud of.” said Peter Erzberger, Commodore of the Gstaad Yacht Club during the prize-giving ceremony.

Past winners of the Centenary Trophy

2011: **Bonafide** (1899)

2012: **Marigold** (1892)

2013: due to adverse weather conditions the title was not awarded

2014: **Olympian** (1913)

2015: **Oriole** (1905)

2016: **Spartan** (1913)

2017: **Tilly XV** (1912)

The Centenary Trophy is organized by The Gstaad Yacht Club in co-operation with the Société Nautique de Saint-Tropez.

Editors' notes:

In 1998 a group of sailor enthusiasts with the vision to "create a unique global yacht club away from the waters, instead of another local club by the waters" founded the Gstaad Yacht Club. Based in the Swiss mountains and in the beginning, very often acknowledged with surprise, the GYC developed to a club with 400 members from over 20 different countries and to a place where members and their guests love to meet. The GYC supports sailing projects on all levels from juniors to professional sailors and it has become a solid force on the Swiss sailing scene and especially among Olympic sailing and the classic yachts.

Media liaison: Carla Anselmi

- mobile [+39 347 4632757](tel:+393474632757)

- email: carlanselmi2@gmail.com

Photographer: Jürg Kaufmann

- Email: juerg@go4image.com

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Gstaad Yacht Club

- web: www.gstaadyachtclub.com

Managing Director: Cindy Schoenrich

- Email: cindy@gstaadyachtclub.com